

Masters of Guidance and Counselling

Handbook Subject Code ED5310



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Welcome & Overview

This handbook has been developed for both Master of Guidance and Counselling students undertaking ED5310 Professional Placement and the placement hosts and supervisors who support their learning. It outlines placement requirements, roles and responsibilities, supervision expectations, assessment processes, and key policies to assist all parties in creating a safe, ethical, and valuable placement experience. While some sections are directed specifically to students or placement hosts, the handbook should be read as a shared guide to support successful professional learning and collaboration.

Our view of placement

- Central to development: Placements are an interactive, evaluative process that strengthens **core counselling skills and competencies**.
- Facilitative supervision: Effective supervision **blends didactic and experiential learning** within a developmental relationship.
- Growing autonomy: As placement progresses, students integrate learning with **greater autonomy, insight, and reflexivity**.

Practicum in Guidance and Counselling. Subject code: ED5310

This placement subject is designed to give students the strongest opportunity to learn as they contribute in real settings. **Students commit to their placement [associated hours, direct hours, supervision hours] and reflect on what they are learning through placement.**

What hosts can expect

- Students arrive with varied professional backgrounds and life experience.
- They bring a curious mindset, ethical understanding, professionalism, and a willingness to learn.
- They benefit from your professional guidance and structured feedback.

Mutual benefit

- Hosts are role models for the next generation of counsellors.
- Hosts gain first-hand insight into the work readiness of future graduates.
- Placements can help students identify promising areas for work.

Appreciation

Thank you for partnering with us as students translate academic learning into effective fieldwork practice. We are grateful for your collaboration.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where our university is located and actively seek to contribute and support the JCU Reconciliation Statement, which exemplifies respect for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures, heritage, knowledge and the valuing of justice and equity for all Australian

Resources and Contact

James Cook University (JCU): jcu.edu.au

Academic Coordinator

Dr Greg Souvan

Subject coordinator & Lecturer (ED5310) greg.souvan@jcu.edu.au

Experience Snapshot

- Over 27 years' experience in the Queensland education system, initially as a teacher and school leader, and for the past 16–17 years as a Guidance Officer.
- University lecturer in counselling, guidance and career development subjects.
- Professional Doctorate in Education, with interests in career development, educational transitions and student wellbeing.
- Extensive experience supporting young people, families and school communities with complex educational, wellbeing and career matters.

Teaching Approach

- Relational, compassionate and strengths-based.
- Connects theory with practical, ethical professional practice.
- Values reflection, cultural responsiveness and the development of confident professional identity.
- Uses engaging learning experiences that encourage discussion, collaboration and application.

Student Placement Team

JCU supports students undertaking ED5310 by administratively supporting suitable placement opportunities. Students may apply for pre-sourced opportunities or self-source a placement that meets supervisory and learning requirements.

How the Placement Team supports you

- Communicates with students and hosts approximately five months prior to each study period.
- Works with the Course Coordinator on the suitability of pre-sourced opportunities.
- Reviews and sends for approval all self-sourced placements.

Administrative enquiries: placements@jcu.edu.au 07 4781 6333

Placement Dates

Placement can begin only after the Placement Contract is signed and returned to the Student Placements Team. The ED5310 Placement Contract needs to be signed off by the ED5310 subject coordinator before placement commences.

Trimesters & preferences

ED5310 is scheduled twice per year

2026: Trimester 1 (27.01.2026-25.04.2026) and Trimester 3 (14.09.2026-12.12.2026).

2027: Trimester 1 (15.02.2027-14.05.2027) and Trimester 3 (13.09.2027-12.12.2027).

Placement Hosts can indicate timeframe preferences and whether placements are block or staggered on the Expression of Interest [EOI] form.

Changes to agreed dates/hours

If dates or hours extend beyond the initial agreement, please advise the Student Placements Team so JCU records can be updated.

Practicum in Guidance & Counselling

ED5310 Placement Overview

Workload during this ED5310 placement is negotiated between the supervisor and the student [student counsellor] before the placement begins. This process ensures consideration of other commitments held by both the student and supervisor, as well as the placement's overall structure. Ongoing and consistent practice supports professional growth and development.

This subject is conducted over a single study period. Students are expected to complete their placement hours within the designated timeframe and submit all required documentation to the Subject Coordinator by the due date.

The placement requirement for ED5310 is a minimum of 100 completed hours.

Placement Requirements

Complete a minimum of 100 placement hours within the study period. Hours are negotiated by the supervisor and the student counsellor before the placement begins. Submit all documentation to the Subject Coordinator by the due date.

Breakdown of hours

Type of placement hours	Minimum number of hours
Associated hours	28 hours (minimum requirement)
Direct hours	64 hours (minimum requirement)
Supervision hours	8 hours (minimum requirement)
Total	100 hours (minimum requirement)

Associated hours

- Observing an experienced counsellor to learn local routines and procedures.
- Working alongside a counsellor with an individual, pair, or small group of clients.
- Attending staff meetings or relevant professional development.
- Background tasks that support case conceptualisation and preparation.

Note: The placement supervisor decides what is to be counted as associated hours. This is to be discussed prior to placement commencing.

Direct hours – These are the hours when a student is working directly with a client, individually or a group setting.

Note: The placement supervisor decides what is to be counted as direct hours. This is to be discussed prior to placement commencing.

Supervision hours - Professional supervision is an essential part of the placement experience and is required whenever a student is providing direct client services. The supervision requirement is based on a ratio of one hour of supervision for every eight hours of direct practice. As a result, for 64 hours of direct client practice there must be a minimum of 8 hours of supervision.

If it is possible to gain more direct hours and supervision hours, and students are strongly encouraged to use this opportunity, but extra hours are not mandatory. If extra hours are completed these are to be recorded and signed off. The extra hours might be useful when a student is applying for work.

Supervision & Supervisor Qualifications

JCU seeks to place students with supervisors who are appropriately qualified, experienced, and able to provide high-quality professional supervision. Supervisor suitability is considered in accordance with the principles and expectations outlined in the current Australian Counselling Association (ACA) Supervision Policy, while recognising the diversity of professional pathways across counselling and related helping professions.

Essential Requirements

Placement supervisors will normally:

- Be currently practising in a counselling, guidance and counselling, social work, psychology, psychotherapy, or closely related helping profession.
- Hold current professional registration, accreditation, or membership with an appropriate professional body relevant to their discipline (e.g., ACA, PACFA, AASW, AHPRA-registered profession).
- Hold a minimum bachelor-level qualification (or equivalent) in counselling or a related discipline.
- Demonstrate substantial post-qualification professional practice experience relevant to the placement setting.
- Be willing and able to provide regular supervision, feedback, and assessment of student learning and professional development.
- Be familiar with, or willing to become familiar with, JCU placement requirements, learning outcomes, and assessment processes.
- Maintain ongoing continuing professional development consistent with the expectations of their profession.
- Have no conflict of interest or prior relationship that could reasonably compromise the supervisory relationship (e.g., family member, current treating practitioner, or current educator).

Preferred Qualifications and Experience

The following attributes are highly desirable:

- Professional supervision training, qualifications, or recognised supervisor endorsement.
- Experience providing professional supervision, mentoring, or workplace-based supervision.
- Knowledge of developmental supervision frameworks and reflective practice approaches.
- Demonstrated commitment to supporting the development of emerging counsellors and helping professionals.
- Ongoing engagement in supervision as part of their own professional practice.

Helpful links: [ACA](#) • [AASW](#) • [AHPRA](#) • [PACFA](#)

Pre-placement Requirements

Working with Children — Pre-placement requirements

All students undertaking a Professional Experience within Australia must hold a valid Working with Children or Vulnerable People check. The Student Placement Team verifies that this requirement is met. Placement Hosts may request to view documentation as part of their internal processes.

JCU Workplace Health, Safety & Conduct Induction

- Covers legislation, hazards in the workplace, before-work task safety, reporting hazards/incidents/injuries, and reporting sexual misconduct & available support.
- Includes professional conduct, responsibilities and policies for student placement.

This mandatory pre-placement requirement is tracked by InPlace and monitored by the Student Placements Team. For queries: placements@jcu.edu.au

Insurance

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/chancellery/legal-and-assurance/insurance/student-insurance-information>

Insurance documentation will also be sent with the confirmation letter once a placement is confirmed

Students need to notify the subject coordinator and the placement team of any changes to the supervision arrangement outlined in the Supervision Contract ASAP. This re-approval process is important for Workplace Health & Safety and insurance purposes.

Placement Processes

The Three Phases of Placement

Phase 1: Organising a placement and setting up the placement.

Phase 2: During placement.

Phase 3: Completing placement.

Phase 1: Organising a placement and setting up placement.

- All students secure a placement (self-source or via Student Placement Team).
- All students contact the supervisor and share the Placement Contract.
- Placement Contract (assessable item) returned to the Subject Coordinator at least one week before the start date.
- After approval, the Subject Coordinator advises the Placements Team, who send a confirmation email. Placement must not commence until confirmation is received. Hours worked before confirmation are not counted.

As the Placement Contract is an assessment item, students are responsible for their own learning and learning outcomes.

The JCU Student Placements Team **supports** in sourcing placements within placement host organisations that meet the placement requirements as outlined by the Australian Counselling Association by sending an Expression of Interest to potential placement hosts.

Pre-placement Requirements - Students

- Complete the Student Placement Application issued by the Student Placements Team
- Blue Card or Working with Children Card
- Complete JCU's mandatory WHS modules
- Attend the mandatory ED5310 induction workshop online
- Be enrolled in ED5310 as a capstone subject

School Based Placements

School based placements in most locations have a centralized process. In completing the Student Placement Application and indicating that a school-based placement is a preference, the Student Placements Team will work with students on the application process.

Student counsellors are not to make direct contact with schools.

Pre-Sourced Placements – Placement Hosts

In Townsville and Cairns localities or where an existing partnership with JCU exists, the Student Placements Team will support in sourcing placement opportunities.

A placement host is asked to complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) form, and the information provided is used to advertise placement opportunities to students. Please be aware that depending on the capacity of organisations this could mean a limited number of opportunities. Student counsellors are required to apply for these pre-sourced placement opportunities by providing their CV and cover letter for consideration. The CVs and cover letters can be shared with placement hosts as required.

JCU encourages all placement hosts to have a pre-placement interview/meeting with potential students to ensure a 'good fit' and as a first point of contact to discuss the learning outcomes to be achieved.

Self-Sourced Placements – Students & Placement Hosts

For localities outside of Townsville and Cairns, or where an existing partnership with JCU does not currently exist, student counsellors are encouraged to investigate potential placement hosts in the area. Student counsellors can self-source a placement with a potential placement host by completing documentation in JCUs InPlace (Placement Management System).

The placement workload is to be negotiated with the supervisor prior to the commencement of the placement. Placement can be undertaken in a block or in hours per week in accord with the

needs of the host and student counsellor.

Note: The expectation is that students will complete the placement hours within the timeframe of the study period and submit all documentation by the due date.

Students, for further information and resources on sourcing your placement, please visit [learnJCU Guidance and Counselling Professional Community](#).

Phase 2: During Placement

Student counsellors are required to revisit the Codes of Ethics at [ACA \(Australian Counselling Association\)](#).

Practice Log and Professional Development Reflection

At the beginning of placement, the student counsellor will complete a Mindful Self-Care scale and formulate an action plan. They will monitor the enactment of this plan for the duration of ED5310. They will also reflect on their IDM professional development needs. This is a document that the student counsellor will refer to during their placement.

Student Professional Placement Logbooks A, B, C

Student counsellors use a Professional Placement Logbook to record their hours and type of fieldwork practice. These logbooks are submitted as an assessment task.

Student counsellors need to ensure that Placement Logbooks have all been signed and reflect the hours and breakdown of hours that were performed. These logbooks are signed at least once a week.

Formal supervision meetings are defined through having a focus on the student and their needs.

Phase 3: Completion of Placement

Student counsellors need to ensure that all relevant documentation is completed, dated and signed.

Students will complete all required assessment placement documentation while on placement.

Placement Roles & Responsibilities

Supervisor — Key Responsibilities (*not exhaustive*)

- Arrange work settings conducive to developing the student's sound work habits and skills as a practitioner in the field.
- Provides induction / onboarding, including the sites structures, procedures, and personnel.
- Work with students in preparing their contract early in their placement.
- Ensure supervision happens as agreed.
- Make sure students understand their responsibilities and their role.
- Set clear expectations that formative and strength-based feedback will be given routinely.
- Supervise and monitor students as they perform placement hours.
- Offer a progression of varied learning tasks and learning activities so students can fulfil their 100 hours (minimum).
- Actively teach and help student counsellor foster their self-care practices.
- Demonstrate willingness to support growth in self-care practices.
- Develop and enhance multicultural competence.
- Intervene where client welfare is at risk.
- Support students with agreed professional development plans and actions.
- Sight and sign the Placement Logbook regularly.
- Prepare and provide feedback identifying areas of knowledge and skill for development and growth.
- Discuss any concerns regarding practices or progress; jointly develop strategies for remediation.
- Advise the subject coordinator/placement team if identified concerns cannot be addressed, ensuring the student is aware of this action.
- Discuss with students at the earliest possible opportunity if the final Placement Report is likely to contain areas of low competency, along with strategies to remediate the situation.
- Provide a final Placement Report on the student's overall competence.

Student Counsellor Responsibilities (*not exhaustive*)

- Proactively and authentically engage in the supervision process.
- Adhere to the expectations and boundaries detailed in the placement contract.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Undertake and engage with the induction/onboarding provided by the host organisation to ensure they can safely attend placement and undertake required responsibilities.
- Identify and monitor developmental levels and competencies.
- Demonstrate responsibility and accountability.
- Pursue active and ongoing self-reflection and assessment of experiences.
- Initiate sufficient contact with the supervisor.
- Attend to the areas of knowledge and skill identified for development and growth.
- Understand and enact important self-care practices.

- Be open to change and alternative methods of practice.
- Consult supervisor or designated contact person in cases of emergency.
- Maintain a Placement Logbook and ensure that it is regularly sighted and signed by supervisor.
- Notify the subject coordinator of any changes to the supervision arrangement outlined in the Supervision Contract ASAP – This re-approval process is important for WPHS and insurance purposes.
- Gain approval from the subject coordinator for participation in counselling activities outside of the supervised placement a minimum of 2 weeks prior to undertaking the proposed activity.

Placement Expectations

Before placement

Signed Contract Approved Prior to Placement Commencing

- Students are successful in securing a placement (self-source or via SPT)
- Students are to contact their supervisor with the Placement Contract
- Placement Contract (assessable item) is returned to Subject Coordinator at least 1 week prior to placement start date
- Once received and approved, Subject Coordinator advises the placements team who will then send a confirmation letter. Placement cannot commence until a confirmation email is received. If placement commences the hours are **not** counted.

As the Placement Contract is part of the student's assessment items, students need to be taking responsibility for their own learning and learning outcomes.

Placement host induction

- At commencement, hosts induct the student to the site: facilities, breaks, safety, emergency exits and procedures.
- Keep it proportionate—align to how a new staff member would be onboarded.

Hours & attendance

- Reflect typical agency work hours; these may vary by setting.
- Physical presence on site is expected unless bona fide placement activities elsewhere (e.g., libraries, client homes, other agencies) are agreed by all stakeholders.

Punctuality

- Be punctual and develop professional work habits.

Confidentiality & ethics

All JCU students are required to acknowledge and abide by JCU's Student Code of Conduct.

If a placement host has their own requirements regarding confidentiality agreements this should be provided to the student at the commencement of placement.

The terms and conditions in relation to confidentiality must always be strictly adhered to by students.

- Observe professional standards; keep agency matters confidential.
- De-identify client information before sharing in interviews, calls, documents, meetings or discussions with peers/university staff.
- Keep sensitive information about agency personnel, other students and the community confidential.
- Work only with clients who have given informed consent to student involvement.

Falsifying placement documentation results in immediate termination and an Unsatisfactory grade.

Negotiating the Workspace

It is important that students respect the workspace and foster an attitude of respect, courtesy, and fairness toward other staff and students.

Respect & professionalism

- Expect a multidisciplinary environment—colleagues may follow different standards and codes of ethics.
- Demonstrate respect, courtesy and fairness toward staff, students and shared spaces.
- Follow site policies for conduct, privacy and use of facilities.

Equipment

- Some sites require a laptop or tablet for orientation materials and placement documentation.
- Discuss equipment needs in initial meetings (including secure storage, Wi-Fi and software access).

Communication & meetings

- Maintain open, professional verbal and (where appropriate) written communication.
- Schedule regular formal supervision meetings for support and professional development.
- Students should initiate sufficient contact with their supervisor.
- If concerns arise, speak with your supervisor first. If unresolved, contact the Subject Coordinator or Student Placements Team.

Raise issues early → Supervisor first; then Subject Coordinator/Placements Team if needed.

Supervision

Meeting focus for supervision (not exhaustive)

The table below identifies some focal points for discussion. Note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Suitability topic	Discussion points	Further examples
Professionalism	Professionalism in the context of defining suitability includes the ACA code of practice.	- Identifying and evaluating behaviour - Practicing emotional intelligence and use of self - Considering language - Respecting colleagues and clients - Demonstrating compassion and empathy - Following policy and procedure - Maintaining respectful interactions with clients - Responding to ethical dilemmas
Openness to learning	- Preparation for placement - Ethical dilemmas and overwhelming difficulties - Balance between competing priorities - Self-care strategies - Learning initiative and motivation - Application of theory to practice.	- Seeking new experiences and learning opportunities - Seeking and receiving feedback - Reflecting on practice - Integrating observations, practice, and theory - Valuing difference - Exploring ethical issues and dilemmas
Context of placement	- Quality of supervision - Compatibility with supervisor - Cultural aspects - Placement site background - Culture within the placement site - Policy and procedure	- Understanding the connection between professional practice and the personal self - Identifying areas for learning - Planning future practice and the development of transferable skills
Critical reflection	- Awareness of personal values, beliefs and attitudes, and how these impact practice - Skills, strengths and previous experiences	- Clarifying expectations for students to have job-specific skills (e.g., interpersonal, presentation, case noting and communication skills)

Recording Structured Supervision Sessions

While it is not an essential requirement, keeping a record of structured supervision sessions is good professional practice for students. Ideally, the student and the supervisor will agree on a recording format / template. Two possible templates are provided below.

Supervision Record Template 1

Supervision Notes
Attendees:
Date and Time:
General Discussion
Intervention skills competence:
Assessment techniques:
Interpersonal assessment:
Client conceptualization:
Individual differences:
Theoretical orientation:
Treatment plan and goals:

Professional ethics:
Comments:
Student Signature:
Supervisor Signature:

Supervision Record Template 2

Supervisee name:	Date:
Supervisor name:	Duration:
Topic/s discussed:	
Action items:	
Agenda for next session:	

IDM domains addressed:

Comments:

Student signature:

Supervisor signature:

Managing Challenges on Placement

Academic Integrity

To many professions acting with integrity is a non-negotiable value. Similarly, universities expect their students to act with integrity, known as academic integrity, as they complete their degrees. Academic integrity is the expectation that student and all other members of the academic community act with honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.



Breaching academic integrity is known as 'academic misconduct' or 'academic dishonesty'. Academic misconduct encompasses a range of unethical behaviours that undermine the principles of honesty and integrity in academic settings such as placement, internship and work integrated learning. These behaviours include plagiarism, contract cheating, collusion, cheating in exams or quizzes, and falsification.

More information about Academic Integrity

- [JCU Student Academic Integrity Page](#)
- [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(TEQSA\) Academic Integrity Information](#)

What happens if academic dishonesty is suspected of occurring.

If the supervisor suspects a student of engaging in academically dishonest behaviours they contact the ED5310subject coordinator in the first instance to discuss their suspicions and any further actions.

JCU Policies and Procedures

- [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)
- [Coursework Academic Integrity Policy](#) and [Procedure](#).

JCU Placement Suitability Policy: [Review of a Student's Suitability to Continue a Course Involving Placement](#)

Rupture identification & repair (supervision)

Rupture: a negative shift in the supervisory relationship (e.g., misunderstandings about alliance/contract, logbook hours, IDM tasks, goals/roles, or interpersonal/professional differences).

Respond: agree a rupture-response plan at start → name & discuss early → reset roles/goals and document decisions → escalate to the coordinator if unresolved.

At-Risk Notification

The [At-Risk Notification Report](#) is to be used during the placement to alert the university to concerns the supervisor may have about the student's performance. This process enables the subject coordinator to organise assistance.

The supervisor completes an At-Risk Notification Report, informing the student why the placement is –

- In possible danger of breakdown.
- In probable danger of breakdown.
- In grave danger of breakdown.

The student signs the form to confirm receipt of the notice. This form provides a final opportunity to plan ways to satisfactorily progress with placement. However, if these plans are not met or if the student's performance is not satisfactory, the placement will be terminated. Placement will be immediately terminated if stakeholder relationships have become non-functional, if there has been a criminal action or if there is some form of significant risk to a stakeholder or an associated party (e.g., a client or other agency personnel). The placement will remain terminated while the matter is investigated or resolved.

Placement Breakdown

Sometimes students might be ready to undertake another placement. Sometimes, they may need to engage in further work or preparation to be ready for another placement experience. The subject coordinator and the student will consider the best way forward. Actions may include:

- Commence another placement
- Complete further preparation before re-placement
- Take a break and seek support before enrolling in placement subject at a future date.

The student will be invited to write a critical reflection on their placement experience by answering the following questions:

- What did I learn about guidance and counselling during the placement?
- What did I learn about myself during placement?
- What aspects of my practice require further attention and / or development?
- What are my learning needs and requirements to successfully progress in a placement?
- What supports and structures might be useful and essential to my learning?

Students will end this critical reflection with a written summary starting with: "A placement that would support my learning involves ..."

This critical reflection explores how the student perceives their learning and whether they are ready for another placement experience. The subject coordinator will assess the critical reflection by considering the student's ability to:

- Critically reflect on self.
- Understand guidance and counselling practices in an organisational context.
- Identify when and how their actions impact others.
- Identify and implement support strategies.
- Positively respond to and implement feedback from others.

After their assessment, the subject coordinator will meet with the student and discuss recommendations for ways forward.

Review of Student's Suitability to Continue in a Course Involving Placement

Refer to the University's policy: <https://www.jcu.edu.au/policy/academic-governance/learning-and-teaching/review-of-a-students-suitability-to-continue-a-course-involving-placement>

Self-awareness is critical to developing and upholding professional values in practice. Students can develop their self-awareness by identifying and managing challenges in their practice, and by developing their capacity to be reflective, non-judgmental, compassionate, and empathic. Importantly, students need to demonstrate an openness to learning on placement. For example, students must be open to feedback, take initiative around their own learning experience and respect colleagues' diversity in practice.

However, some students may not be ready or suitable for professional guidance and counselling practice. These students may show an inability to demonstrate key values, skills and knowledge required for professional practice. This is often identified when a student displays a lack of professionalism, respect or socially just practice. Students who are not prepared or willing to address this may require further development before continuing professional placement.

ED5310 Professional Placement Portfolio — Assessment Components

***Students:** For a detailed description of each assessment component, refer to the ED5310 Assessment Overview document which will be published on the LearnJCU subject site 2 weeks before the subject commences. Please discuss relevant documents with your Placement Supervisor at the commencement of placement.

The eight documents related to portfolio tasks (assessment components) include:

Before placement:

Document 1 - Placement Contract

During placement

Document 2 — Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS, 2018) & Mindful Practice Log

Document 3 — Placement Logbooks (3 in total)

Record direct hours, supervision hours, and associated hours; obtain frequent supervisor signatures.

End of placement

Document 4 — Placement Report (Supervisor)

Assesses development against 8 IDM competencies (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010).

→ Competency must be achieved for a Satisfactory grade in ED5310.

Document 5 — Professional Development Questionnaire (x2)

Self-perceived development against IDM: pre-placement (intensive workshop) and post-placement.

Document 6 — Professional Development Reflection

≥ 1000 words reflecting on overall development as a counsellor; revisit the 8 competencies.

Document 7 — Placement Feedback (Student)

Your experience of the placement to help strengthen the course.

Document 8 — Self-Development Reflection

250–500 words per subject: list subjects taken, synthesise learning, and explain how each informed your placement.



JAMES COOK
UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA

